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Despite Neighbors' Concerns, Irving St. Demo OKd

By Thomas K. Pendergast

Demolition of the abandoned Police Credit Union building at 2550 Irving St. will proceed despite neighborhood concerns about further spreading a toxic chemical linked to cancer.

The lot it sits on is slated for construction of a 90-unit, seven-story "affordable housing" development.

Although a demolition permit was issued last November by the SF Planning Department, the Mid-Sunset Neighborhood Association (MSNA) appealed, asking for additional testing during the demolition to monitor the carcinogen tetrachloroethylene, also known as perchloroethylene (PCE). On Feb. 22, the SF Board of Appeals denied the association's appeal with a 3-2 vote.

Complicating the issue is the California state law popularly known as SB-35, championed by State Senator Scott Wiener, which amends the government code to require local government entities to streamline the approval of certain housing projects by skipping the usual process of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and removing the need for Conditional Use Authorizations.

"It comes down to fear, fear that people are going to get cancer," Board President Rick Swig said at the hearing. "And it comes down to laws that are in place, made by the State of California. I would like to move this forward but not at the risk of the community.

"The neighborhood wants it properly tested. That seems to be the bottom line. They want a site-management program

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Remarkable Season Comes To an End for Lincoln H.S. B-Ball

The Lincoln high school boys basketball team earned the CIF city championship by overwhelming the Lowell Cardinals on Feb. 24 at Kezar Pavilion. The Mustangs scored twice as many points as their cross-city rivals: 54-27.

After winning the city title, the Mustangs opened the 2023 CIF State Boys Basketball Championship Division III tournament on Feb. 28 at Lincoln by defeating the Cougars of Christopher High School from Gilroy in a nail-biter and moved past the first round with a 72-66 victory. Led by point guard senior Jeremyah Aquino, the Mustangs pulled away with the lead in the second quarter and stayed ahead until the clock expired.

The city champs then traveled to face the Oakland Tech Bulldogs in round II on March 2. The Mustangs kept the lead throughout the game until momentum shifted in the fourth quarter when the Bulldogs scored 18 points and held the Mustang offense to just 5 points; final score was 59-64.

Although the loss ended state championship aspirations for the Mustangs, the last game marked the end of an exceptional season that includes a city title and a 27-4 overall record.

– Yovany Moreno

Abraham Lincoln High School senior Jeremyah Aquino prepares to shoot a free throw in the first round of the CIF State Championship tournament at home versus Christopher High School from Gilroy. *Photo by Yovany Moreno.*

Sunset Home Explosion Results in Death and Significant Damage

By Jonathan Farrell

The 1700 block of 22nd Avenue, between Kirkham and Lawton streets, was jolted by a huge blast on the morning of Feb. 9 when a house exploded into a three-alarm fire resulting in one death, three injuries that required hospitalization and damage to 18 homes and several cars.

It took the efforts of more than 100 firefighters and 35 units/apparatus to attend to the blaze, which occurred at 9:22 a.m.

Both the San Francisco fire and police departments reported that the person who was killed in the explosion was a resident of the house. Working jointly in investigations, the SFPD/ SFFD Arson Task Force with the help of the SFPD Narcotics Division determined that a narcotics manufacturing operation in the house was the cause of the explosion.

The following day, Feb. 10, SFPD officers/investigators arrested 53-year-old Darron Price who lived at the home. Later news reports revealed that it was his wife, 51-year-old Rita Price, who was killed in the explosion. The two-story house collapsed from the explosion and the blaze destroyed the house.

"It sounded like a barrel bomb. It was pretty crazy," said Sunset resident Henry Chu. "I go by that house almost every day since I work at Punch King Fitness on Noriega Street."

Describing the Sunset as typically "a nice middle-class neighborhood," Chu said the last time something like this happened was more than 20 years ago in 1998 when a house on 19th Avenue exploded knocking it off its foundation at 45-degree angle. It was later discovered that illegal fireworks had been stored in the basement.

Chu mentioned how these types of houses have potential for a home-based business. The fact that a house can be seen more as an investment (with equity) or as a commodity than a single-family home can sometimes lead owners to use a house as a business.

"This was a really nice house," said Chu. Surmising from later news reports, he noted that because a narcotics trade was being operated

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Summer Resource Fair Features Enrichment Opportunities

By Kate Quach

Woven along the outer gates of the Botanical Garden, colorfully fringed tents flapped in the brisk Golden Gate Park breeze. Calvin, 11 years old, shrugged off the lightly drizzling Saturday afternoon weather, bounded past his dad, David Tracy, toward the open double doors of the County Fair Building. Inside, a party of pop music, dancing and creative play zones ranging from archery to candle-making launched Calvin into the event.

"We showed up and we didn't know they were going to have all of these activities for the kids to try out," Tracy said.

Zumba was one of about 100 exhibitors at the SF Summer Resource Fair on Feb. 11 at the County Fair Building in Golden Gate Park. *Photo by Kate Quach.*

Over the course of the day, more than 2,400 people explored the 100 summer camps and programs exhibiting at the San Francisco Summer Resource Fair on Feb. 11. At its first reappearance since 2020, the Fair was designed to extend summer enrichment opportunities to interested families, especially those with children with disabilities. Tracy expressed that while building an educational summertime agenda for Calvin, who is autistic, could be difficult, the Resource Fair gave them both the chance to engage in the City's offerings.

"Finding things that are resources for kids like Calvin is going to be a challenge," Tracy said. "But this is such an amazing opportunity to be out there and have fun."

Tracy, an active parent in the San Francisco Recreation and Park Department's Therapeutic Recreation Inclusion Services team's summer camps, re-enrolls Calvin in their inclusive Everybody Travels city sight-seeing pro-

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Looking Back

Kinen Carvala

Park Bandshell

How did Hawaiian sugar contribute to placing a bandshell in Golden Gate Park?

In September 1882, 12 musicians in San Francisco started what would become the Golden Gate Park Band to perform regular concerts in the park at its first bandstand, a wooden one in "Conservatory Valley." The Park's second bandstand in 1886 was at the site of the present-day tennis courts, according to the book "Five Thousand Concerts in the Park: The History of the Golden Gate Park Band," by David W. Bandy.

In December 1890, the King of Hawaii visited San Francisco and attended a park music performance. Hawaii was a monarchy until the 1893 overthrow. Hawaii was annexed as a U.S. territory in 1898, then became the 50th state in 1959.

The band's audience size outgrew the second bandstand, leading to the construction of the third and present bandstand in the park, the Spreckels Temple of Music with a capacity of 20,000 in the Music Concourse.

Claus Spreckels was a German immigrant to the United States. He made his fortune in sugar, including sugar from the Kingdom of Hawaii subject to favorable trade treaties. He paid $75,000 out of the $78,810 construction cost of the bandshell, according to the book "San Francisco's Golden Gate Park: A Thousand and Seventeen Acres of Stories," by Christopher Pollock, historian-in-residence at the San Francisco Recreation and Park Department.

The president of the park commission, Adolph Bernard Spreckels, convinced his father Claus to donate funds for the bandstand's construction, according to Gary Kamiya's book "Spirits of San Francisco Voyages Through the Unknown City." General William Henry Linow Barnes, a prominent lawyer and major-general of the National Guard of California, accepted the Temple gift on behalf of the City's people. Thirty thousand people attended the dedication, according to the SF Chronicle.

Inscribed on the southwest wall of the bandshell is "Gift of Claus Spreckels. On the northwest wall of the bandshell is inscribed the dedication date, Sept. 9, 1900, in Roman numerals.

Sept. 9 is the anniversary of California Admission Day, when California became the 31st state of the U.S. in 1850.

Spreckels mentioned at the dedication that free music is attractive to rich and poor. Since he saw that Golden Gate Park was already attracting so many people, he decided that the park was a good place to provide music.

The Spreckels Temple of Music, on the western edge of the Music Concourse in Golden Gate Park, was dedicated on Sept. 9, 1900. Construction was made possible with a gift of $75,000 by Claus Spreckels, an industrialist who made his fortune in the sugar industry. His son, Adolph Spreckels, was an heir to the sugar fortune. He married Alma, a woman 24 years his junior. She may have coined the phrase when she referred to her older husband as her "sugar daddy." *Photo by Michael Durand.*

Brothers James and Merritt Reid were the architects, according to a landmark designation report for the Music Concourse. Corinthian columns are elaborately decorated at the top of both sides of the 72-foot-tall bandshell. Extending out from sides of the bandshell are eight pairs of Ionic columns with simpler scroll-like ornamentation at the top. Sandstone from Colusa County northwest of Sacramento is the main original material in the bandshell. The sunken sandstone panels in the bandshell's half-domed stage ceiling serves the purpose of reflecting music, according to the landmark report.

Robert Ingersoll Aitken sculpted two 20-feet by 42-feet semi-nude figures, one playing a lyre, the other a trumpet in the spandrels, the gap between the curve of the arc of the bandshell's half dome and straight walls. Aitken, born in San Francisco in 1878, later sculpted the McKinley monument in Golden Gate Park, described in this column in February 2021.

The 1906 and 1989 earthquakes damaged the bandstand causing the Golden Gate Park Band to temporarily play at other venues. In addition to the earthquake repairs, more seismic upgrades were done in 1994 by Alameida Architecture, according to its website.

In 2022, 20 accessible parking spaces were added to the bandshell parking lot as part of Rec. and Park's Golden Gate Park Access and Safety Program. The bathrooms at the bandshell's rear were added after 1943.

The band's Sunday musical concerts traditionally started with the Star-Spangled Banner and from the 1930s to mid-1950s ended with God Bless America, according to Nathaniel L. Pergamit's thesis on the band's history. Singers have often joined the band's wind instruments in concerts.

Pergamit also wrote about the composers (excluding the aforementioned traditional songs) whose pieces the band played at the most performances. John Phillip Sousa was the most played composer for the 1900-1929 era but fell to 16th place from 1930 to 1945. Victor Herbert was most popular from 1930 to 1960. Richard Rodgers was most popular from 1961 to 1971.

In a concert in 1967, the band played "You'll Never Walk Alone" from Rodgers and Hammerstein's 1945 musical "Carousel." Pergamit noted the contrast between that concert and the hippie countercultural Human Be-In a few hundred yards away in a different part of the park the previous day.

The Band's Centennial Concert in 1982 was held in San Francisco's City Hall at the invitation of then-Mayor Dianne Feinstein. The musicians' then-new red uniforms have remained the Band's standard.

The Golden Gate Park Band is a non-profit organization providing free concerts to the people of San Francisco on behalf of Rec. and Park. Band members are professional musicians and members of Musicians Union Local 6. The band had 30 musicians as of Sam Whiting's Aug. 1, 2021, article in the SF Chronicle. Due to curtailed in-person events in 2020 and 2021 because of COVID, and changes in funding rules, annual funding for the band can be challenging as around 60% of the band's 2023 operating budget is from San Francisco Grants for the Arts, and the rest is from donations from the public, according to the band's website.

The text "Lift Every Voice" in 4-foot, 3-inch-tall bronze-coated aluminum letters on top of the bandshell was unveiled on Dec. 1, 2021, a two-year installation by the non-profit Illuminate the Arts, according to Jessica Flores writing for the SF Chronicle. The words refer to a hymn by civil rights champion James Weldon Johnson, "Lift Every Voice and Sing," also known as the "Black national anthem," according to a press release by the mayor's office.

The Spreckels Temple of Music is at the west end of the Music Concourse. Free concerts at the bandshell by various performers (other than the band) starts on March 1, 2023 according to https://sfrecpark.org/1570/Golden-Gate-Bandshell-Concerts. The 2022 season featured genres like rock, rhythm and blues, soul and jazz. The Golden Gate Park Band's free Sunday 1 p.m. concerts begin on April 30, 2023.

State-of-the-Art Greenhouse Opening Soon in GG Park's Botanical Garden

By Linda Badger

The San Francisco Botanical Garden is about to realize its dream of opening a fully operational, state-of-the-art plant nursery to replace the deteriorated facilities it operated for more than 55 years.

"The new plant nursery will enable us to expand and enhance our plant collections and fulfill our vital role as a leading botanical garden, in service to the public while also supporting global conservation efforts," said Ryan Guillou, director of Collections and Conservation of the Gardens of Golden Gate Park.

The San Francisco Botanical Garden is home to many unique and threatened plants, from here and around the world, including its magnolias, high elevation palms and plants from cloud forest regions. Starting this summer, the gardeners and volunteers will work in a new nursery complex in the Botanical Garden to propagate and conserve these and other plants for its "living collection."

The Garden will also share seeds, cuttings and plants with other institutions promoting conservation, and will import new plants from around the world to diversify its own collection here in San Francisco.

Construction of the new nursery complex began in the fall of 2021 and is expected to be finished by this summer, but the project has been in development for more than a decade. The SF Board of Supervisors approved a proposed nursery complex in 2012, with the San Francisco Botanical Garden Society (SFBGS) agreeing to "gift" the complex to San Francisco if sufficient funds were raised to complete the project.

The design, approved by the Board in 2012, included a public learning center to teach San Francisco residents and students about horticulture and the plant world. In 2021, however, the San Francisco Recreation and Park Department approved a simpler redesign submitted by SFBGS which eliminated the

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Engardio's First Town Hall Meeting Covers the Sunset's Many Challenges

By Thomas K. Pendergast

At his inaugural town hall meeting on Feb. 9, newly elected District 4 Supervisor Joel Engardio faced more than 50 people inside the SFPD Taraval Station talking about RVs parked near Ocean Beach, housing and the homeless, drug addiction, hate crimes and police staffing.

The first supervisor to upset an incumbent in the Sunset since district elections were reinstated in 2000, Engardio now faces the same issues his predecessor Gordon Mar did; with the job of making policy, yet staying nimble at big-city political maneuvering, while simultaneously representing residents of the largest geographical district in San Francisco.

And according to Engardio, it is also the first time in years that the D4 supervisor and key city officials are politically aligned.

"I have hope because this is the first time you have a police chief, a district attorney and a mayor who all like each other and are on the same page," Engardio said. "We've suffered through many community meetings where the police department points the finger at the DA, the DA points the finger at the police department and blame each other for all the problems and hate each other and don't work together.

"This is new. We haven't had this before. So, I'm very hopeful that we can get our act together and make some positive change," he said.

One of the first issues he wants to tackle is hate crimes against Asians, especially the elderly.

"I'm reaching out to the Asian community, especially the monolingual and Cantonese-speaking community. I want to introduce Kit Lam, who is on my staff and is doing a really great job," he said. "Kit is going around and meeting all the owners of businesses in the Sunset who speak Cantonese, so we've been connected to what's going on. And we're doing the same through Chinese-language media.

"And as for public safety for Asian-Americans in general, it's my job to advocate for resources that we can bring into the Sunset."

Bringing those resources to the Sunset, however, will be challenging because the SFPD is short of officers throughout the City.

He said San Francisco is down about 500 officers right now. Taraval Station has 65 officers.

"That sounds like a decent number, but four years ago it was 130. We're half of where we were four years ago," Engardio said. "And the number needed … the bare minimum at Taraval Station, is actually 85."

"On any given night, there might only be three or four officers patrolling all of the Taraval District … the largest geography of any of the police districts and it extends from the ocean to Twin Peaks, Golden Gate Park all the way to Daly City. It's vast. It's 130,000 people who live in that area," he said. "It could take 20 minutes to get from one end to the other."

He discussed a new program where retired police officers can be rehired at a lower pay rate than "full officers," and although they would not carry weapons, they would get radios.

"They know what they're doing. They can walk up and down the street and they know what to call in and what not to call in," he said. "Unfortunately, we don't have the resources right now for a beat officer to walk up and down Irving Street."

Another crime issue has been brewing in the Outer Sunset along the Lower Great Highway, where RVs line the curbs and some people living in them have caused trouble for local residents.

District 4 Supervisor Joel Engardio shared thoughts and ideas with members of the community at the Taraval Police Station. *Photo by Thomas K. Pendergast.*

"It was hell living out there last year, the motor homes that were getting arsoned and blowing up out there, women getting raped in parking lots, it was horrible for all of us," local resident Michael Nohr said. "The City is not handling the situations that we're dealing with in an adult manner. It's like having a child in the middle of the room shooting up heroin and we're just watching it, and we're going 'well, they have rights, and we really can't do anything about it.' Well what about the other people's rights that are being affected by what's going on?"

"There's not a lot we can do. Our hands are tied by our Police Commission, who sets policy for what we can do and how police officers can and cannot enforce existing laws," Engardio said.

"Our hands are also tied by the courts. Some judges have ruled that we cannot tell people they are not allowed to have a tent or be in an RV if we can't offer an alternative for them to go. And our city attorney is fighting that ruling because it really ties our hands with what we can do."

While building more housing might help in the long term, for now there are mental health and drug addiction problems contributing to this situation and to crime in general.

"There's a push for harm reduction, which is basically saving lives, making sure that if you're going to use fentanyl or shoot up heroin, we're going to make sure you don't overdose," Engardio said. "And then the abstinence-recovery is where you're expected to go into recovery and not use the drugs. And in my view, we should use every tool in the toolkit. Harm reduction has a role and abstinence-recovery has a role.

"We need to have this holistic approach and we also have to have an accountability aspect as well because we need to make sure we're focusing on the source of the problem – the dealers who are dealing the deadly Fentanyl in the first place," he said. "We have to make sure we are prosecuting the dealers and getting rid of them because they're providing the product that's killing people."

When someone asked Engardio what his plan is for building new housing, he called for creating more family housing, with more two- to three-bedroom units and raising building heights along commercial corridors and transit lines up to five or six stories, with ground-floor commercial spaces.

The City is under pressure from the California state government to build 82,000 units by 2031, a difficult task considering that San Francisco averaged 2,550 units a year over the past two decades, according to the San Francisco Chronicle. The state's mandate would require the City to build more than 10,000 units each year.

Adding to the challenge is the requirement that 46,000 of the 82,000 units must be affordable to low- and moderate-income households.

Cities that do not meet the state's requirement face cuts in funding for housing and transportation and could also trigger the state to override local authorities in approving affordable housing projects.

"And so, if we don't live up to that, we're going to lose a lot of funding," Engardio said.

He brought up the alternative commonly known as "builder's remedy," wherein if the City doesn't comply "all bets are off" and developers can bypass local scrutiny.

"I think it's important that we be in compliance and we work to show that we are doing what we can to build housing. And then, if we are proactive about it, we can build the housing that fits our needs," he said. "Whereas, if we resist it and just say no to everything, then we could get hit with a builder's remedy; I don't think anyone wants that."

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Feds Again Pause the Forced Removal of Laguna Honda Hospital Patients

By Thomas K. Pendergast

Federal authorities once again paused the forced removal of more than 600 patients from Laguna Honda Hospital (LHH) until May. The 157-year-old institution, however, still lingers in an existential ICU of bureaucracy.

The hospital has not lost its license, but most patients there are covered by Medicare and Medicaid. Both programs terminated the hospital's participation after the U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) decertified it because of deficiencies in safety protocols, improper hygiene practices by the staff and two nearly-fatal overdoses from illegal drugs brought into the hospital by patients.

In April 2022, the CMS terminated its Medicare and Medicaid payments to Laguna Honda.

Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services committed to giving the hospital financial help in relocating approximately 670 patients by mid-September, 2022.

Laguna Honda Hospital transferred 41 residents to other skilled nursing facilities and discharged an additional 16 residents. Of those, 12 people died within weeks or months of being transferred.

San Francisco sued the federal government for failing to provide adequate time to repeal the original citations. The City and CMS came to an agreement in July 2022 to pause transfers until Feb. 2.

On Jan. 13, the City Attorney's Office wrote the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) requesting the pause in patient transfers be extended to May 30 of this year.

"LHH has satisfied its milestone obligations under the Settlement Agreement, has successfully implemented many improvements in care, is making progress in addressing remaining issues and is well on its way toward recertification," according to the letter sent by the City Attorney's Office.

On Feb. 1, CMS notified the hospital that they now have until May 19 to come up with a recertification plan.

"CMS has considered Laguna Honda's request and agrees to provide Laguna Honda extended federal funding while the facility continues to pause resident transfers and discharges, until May 19, 2023, under the terms of the settlement/systems improvement agreement," according to the response letter sent by Jean C. Ay, the HHS San Francisco and Seattle Survey and Enforcement Division director.

"This extension of the pause does not extend federal funding past Nov. 13, 2023. Laguna Honda, therefore, is advised to manage its resources, including its plans to safely discharge and transfer residents, accordingly, and with that date in mind for when the skilled nursing facility will no longer receive any federal funding."

The city attorney's Jan. 13 letter requesting the extension of the pause in patient transfers discussed the impact that not doing so would have on the patients and their families.

"Because of its size, history, amenities and patient population, LHH is a unique facility in the country, providing critical care for many of San Francisco's most vulnerable residents, and its residents would be best served by avoiding unnecessary transfer trauma and remaining at LHH through the recertification process," the City's letter said.

"If transfers resume, elderly residents with dementia will face the confusion, disruption and the ordeal of being transferred away from their long-term caregivers for reasons they might not understand. For elderly residents, maintaining familiarity with people, place and surroundings is important for their orientation and stability.

"The harm that residents could face from being unnecessarily transferred from LHH is compounded by the fact that there are few skilled nursing beds available for LHH's residents in the Bay Area, or surrounding communities. Therefore, it is likely that LHH would be forced to transfer patients to counties outside of the Bay Area or even out of state. Transferring patients hundreds of miles from their home would uproot them from their family and friends, as well as removing them from the only caregivers they know," the city attorney's letter said.

The hospital faces yet another challenge, however, because when it renews its license, it might have to follow new rules wherein no more than two patients can share one bathroom, as opposed to three patients, which the old rules had allowed.

Unless there is a compromise on that as well, if it wants its license renewed, the hospital might have to remove 120 beds regardless, according to the hospital's Interim Chief Executive Officer Roland Pickens, who called this an "unsettled issue."

Meanwhile, another lawsuit seeking an injunction to stop further patient transfers has been filed against officials at both the CMS and the California Department of Public Health by attorney Louise H. Renne on behalf of four patients residing there.

"Our clients appreciate the pause; it's a step in the right direction, but frankly there ought to be no transfers whatsoever," Renne said. "There's no need for it. There's no place elsewhere for the residents of Laguna Honda."

She also noted that the hospital is currently forbidden to accept new residents.

"That means there's a real backup at places like San Francisco General, where people who are in need of skilled nursing care and rehabilitation can't be placed at Laguna Honda. And because they're mostly poor people there's no place for them to go," she said.

Renne acknowledges that CMS found serious problems with the hospital's procedures and health standards, however, "that's no reason to evict innocent people. It's wrong and it's cruel. Why take it out on the patients?"

"Any mistakes have to be corrected; there's no doubt about that. But there's nobody that's died at Laguna Honda because of Laguna Honda care. They died because the feds and the state have ousted them. That's what's so outrageous about this," Renne said.

"This idea of 'we'll pause it here; we'll pause it there.' They're just toying with people's emotions."

San Francisco Archbishop Salvatore J. Cordileone released a statement about Laguna Honda Hospital patients as well.

"For many decades, the hospital has been one of the very few publicly funded nursing homes in the country, one where many residents have found a haven," Cordileone said. "In the face of the current prospect of some infirm and elderly patients being transferred from their residences due to regulatory and funding concerns, I urge community leaders to ensure the stability and protection of vulnerable individuals. We pray that Laguna Honda may continue to be a haven for the poor, sick and elderly and that our brothers and sisters in San Francisco will be cared for as they face trials and illness."

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Real Estate

John M. Lee

Ready for the Spring Market?

The year is well underway, and like any other year, people are preparing for the big push in the spring real estate market. However, unlike every year, there is uncertainty in the air.

It seems like the COVID effect is behind us and not many people are even talking about it anymore. The market slowed down towards the end of last year with uncertainty in our economy and rising interest rates. Thirty-year mortgages rose from about 3% at the beginning of 2022 to about 7% in November. It dipped slightly to about 6% early this year and is currently hovering at about 6.5%.

With the low amount of inventory at the beginning of the year, we saw some multiple offers and overbidding again. Where it goes is anyone's guess at the moment. Currently, I am seeing more properties being prepared for the market and I expect a decent spring selling season.

If you are preparing your home for sale during this time, there are many more factors to consider. Have you ever wondered why some homes sell at a higher price than others? The answer lies in pricing and emotional appeal. Purchasing a home is a very emotional process and usually creates a very stressful time in the life of the purchaser. Many times, buyers are making the largest financial commitment of their lives and are unsure of whether they are getting the right deal.

Thus, when other people are offering on the same property, the multiple offers reassure buyers that they are making the right decision because others feel the same way about the home as they do.

As a seller then, how do you create these emotions so that your property will sell quickly and for the highest price in today's market? Preparing a property for sale is especially important because people today are busier than before, and thus they are looking for homes which are in move-in condition.

There are many inexpensive preparations work which will bring returns many times over for the sellers.

First of all, declutter the house. It's amazing how much stuff accumulates over the years. By removing large items of furniture and putting belongings away will make a home show larger than it is, and gives the impression that the home is spacious and well cared for.

Painting and freshening up the backyard can be inexpensive, and yet provide the impression that a home is well maintained. Refinishing the hardwood floors will do wonders for showing off the house.

If you want to go further, staging companies are available who will bring in complete sets of furniture to complement the age and décor of the house. We have found that this adds tremendous value, makes your home show like a model, and separates your home from others on the market. As Richmond and Sunset homes are selling for well above the $1 million mark now, the staging expense is becoming a smaller percentage of the selling price and thus makes more economic sense than ever before.

Buying is an emotional process. When a buyer walks into the home, I have a good feeling about whether he or she will buy that house. In order to obtain the highest possible price, buyers need to feel comfortable and know that this is the right home for them.

Marketing in our modern world is different from the past. Online presence plays a bigger role with most buyers deciding whether to go visit a property or not based on its internet presence. So virtual tours with good photos and videos are more important than ever.

Buying and selling a home is a stressful and emotional time in one's life and even more so during this uncertain time. But no matter what happens, there will be people who need to buy or sell. And that's when good advice is necessary from a professional to help to make that buying and selling decision as easy and painless as possible.

John M. Lee is a broker with Compass specializing in the Richmond and Sunset districts. If you have any real estate questions, call him at 415-465-0505 or email at johnlee@isellsf.com. Find an archive of John M. Lee's columns at RichmondSunsetNews.com.

Sunset Homes Sold in February*

Address	Bed	Bath	Sq. Ft.	Price
2258 41st Ave.	3	2.5	1,412	$1,375,000
2241 17th Ave.	3	1	1,550	1,500,000
1543 46th Ave.	2	1	1,075	1,528,000
1569 16th Ave.	2	1.5	1,575	1,800,000
1594 44th Ave.	4	3	1,930	1,800,000
1266 39th Ave.	4	2	2,332	2,350,000
1212 Arguello Blvd.	3	2.5	2,100	2,800,000

**Partial listing. Source: M.L.S.*

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Commentary

Quentin L. Kopp

Ruminations on Reparations

On April 19, 1972, John B. Connally, Jr., then-U.S. secretary of the treasury, declared at the American Society of Newspaper Editors meeting in Washington, D.C.: "A democracy unsatisfied (by support of the people] cannot long survive.... We live in)robably the most turbulent and tormented times in the history of this nation. Criticize ... disagree, yes, but also we have as leaders an obligation to be fair and keep in perspective what we are and what we hope to be."

Now that taxpayer claims overcharging the City and County for collecting and disposing trash from municipal properties have been paid by the monopoly known as Recology, Inc. in the amount of $25 million as a credit against future charges, citizens would expect the expired five-year contract with the monopoly for residential and commercial trash to foster competitive bidding for that garbage collection. An ordinance by the Board of Supervisors and mayor will effectuate the end of such monopoly. Your scribe expected Boara d President Aaron Peskin to introduce that long-deserved law, but at press time, there has been exasperating silence from the crafty Telegraph Hill official. Meanwhile, Republic Services won the municipal properties trash contract and is ready with others to bid for private properties' collection and environmental reclamation.

Last December, San Franciscans got a look at the handiwork of the San Francisco African American Reparation Advisory Committee's "Reparations Plan," prepared by the San Francisco Human Rights Commission staff and numbering 58 pages. It emanates from then-Board President Shamman Walton's February 2020 resolution adopted that December. The Committee consists of 15 members appointed by the Board of Supervisors, including someone who has experienced incarceration, homelessness and public housing residence.

The Committee recommends a $5 million payment to any African-American aged 18 years or older who satisfies two of eight criteria, some of which don't even mandate having lived in San Francisco or possessing even some flimsy connection to our City.

As the Washington Examiner noted last month, taxpayers whose forebearers didn't own slaves or died in the Civil War or possessed any U.S. ancestors before the Civil War, will pay "reparations," even to people convicted and imprisoned for crimes they committed.

As a Harvard Magazine reader commented last month, the collection line for taxpayer money will ultimately include women denied until 1919 their voting rights, handicapped people without government-enforced opportunities, Asians excluded from immigration to America or public schools herein, Jews enslaved in Egypt or suffering discrimination here. Everyone can seek such reward. With City Hall approvals, an independent "Office of Reparations" and a Reparation Stakeholder Authority "independent of the City and County" must be established and funded. Happy Days will be here again for such appointees.

While reparations were oozing through City Hall, the author of the legislation creating the San Francisco African-American Reparations Committee, the same Supervisor Walton, was confidentially exonerated by City Hall's Human Resources director on July 5, 2022, for verbally harassing Sheriff's Cadet Emare Butler who unsuccessfully appealed such white-wash to the Civil Service Commission where it was similarly denied. Walton had previously demanded Board of Education Commissioner Ann Hsu's resignation for use of alleged racist language. It's permissible, obviously, for him to use the N-word toward the young Black cadet who asked him to remove his belt and metal, like all others entering City Hall but, wait: Walton's Chief of Staff Natalie Gee announced the N-word is only racist if someone who isn't Black utters it, and the incident was "normal" communication between two Black males and a "sign of solidarity." You can't make this anemic result up!

Meanwhile, Harvard University's student newspaper, The Crimson, revealed that more than 80% of Harvard's faculty identify politically as "liberal" or "very liberal" and just 1% of those surveyed of 1,100 members of the faculty of Arts and Sciences and the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences characterized themselves as "conservative." None claimed to be "very conservative." Only 25% supported increasing faculty diversity by hiring more conservative-leaning professors and 31% opposed employing conservative professors to increase ideological diversity.

Thanks to the Common Sense Party (more on that in April) member Marc Norton, I'm pleased to report San Francisco Heritage on Jan. 25, 2022, conveyed a meritorious recommendation to our Planning Commission to preserve as historic 369 Valley St. (in Noe Valley), consisting of two "earthquake shacks" configured as one cottage, to save it from development. I second the effort.

As Civil War chaplain Father Abram Joseph Ryan noted in "A Land Without Ruins": "A land without ruins is a land without memories is a land without history." May we always commemorate San Francisco's fire and earthquake of April 18, 1906.

Quentin Kopp is a former San Francisco supervisor, state senator, member of the SF Ethics Commission and retired judge.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

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COMMENTARIES AND LETTERS

From the editor: All commentaries we publish are the opinions of the writers and should not be considered our editorial stance on issues. We strive to remain neutral and offer a balance of points of views. We invite readers who wish to express their opinions to send a letter to the editor to Editor@RichmondSunsetNews.com. Word limit for the newspaper is 350, for the website, 500. RichmondSunsetNews.com.

DAHLIA PLANT AND TUBER SALE

The annual dahlia plant and tuber sale will be held at the Hall of Flowers in Golden Gate Park (Ninth Avenue and Lincoln Way) on Saturday, April 22, 9:30 a.m. until sold out (usually noon). For additional information, call 415-994-2448.

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Felton Institute, a non-profit social services provider, has an opening for a community liaison: The part-time temporary position is with the Community Liaison Program, Department of Disability and Aging Services (DAS). Job duties: Provide technical assistance by teaching basic computer skills on a smart device (smart phone, tablet or laptop). Skills include downloading and using the Zoom app, teaching Google Services, as well as navigating the internet to access resources helpful for daily living. Enjoy working with older adults and people with disabilities. Proficient in Cantonese and English. Send resume to Jobs@felton.org.

FELTON TECH SQUAD

Felton's Tech Squad is providing free basic tech support for older adults and people with disabilities in the Richmond and Sunset districts. Ask questions regarding how to navigate your smartphone, tablet or laptop.

- **Friday, March 3,** 1:30-3:30 p.m. at the Richmond Library (351 Ninth Ave.) Drop-in for a one-on-one session in English, Cantonese and Mandarin
- **Friday, March 10,** 1:30-3:30 p.m. at the Anza Library (550 37th Ave./Geary Boulevard) Group session in English 1:30-2:30 p.m. Learn basic skills, features and apps on your smartphone and tablet. Drop-in session 2:30-3:30 p.m.
- **Friday, March 24,** 1:30-3:30 p.m. at the Ortega Library (3223 Ortega St.) Group session in English, 1:30-2:30 p.m. Learn basic skills, features and apps on your smartphone and tablet. Drop-in session 2:30-3:30 p.m.

For more information, please call 415-474-1558 or email techsquad@felton.org.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Happy March birthday to Ramona Barker, Ryan Bermudez, Dabheyba Carney, Jashua Carter, Jasrrie Chang, Albert Chow, Francois Dermu, VMD PhD, Jett, Jasmine Gillies, Sarah K., Alex Kozakiewicz, Peter Nicoletti, TGP, Milady Rodriguez, Maddy and Ken R., Jessica Pontigo Sevier, Mike Sill, Brendan and Daniel VN, Gabriela Pacheco Ventura and Big Jim. *To add a name to the monthly birthday list, email Editor@RichmondSunsetNews.com. Free.*

LOST AND FOUND

Found: Man's gold ring, engraved, found on Jan. 21 in the vicinity of Andronico's on Irving Street. If it is yours, email Editor@RichmondSunsetNews.com with a description.

OUTER SUNSET FARMERS MARKET AND MERCANTILE

Join us every Sunday at the Outer Sunset Farmers Market and Mercantile, where you can find fresh produce from local farmers and ranchers, enjoy delicious dishes from Outer Sunset eateries and discover unique finds from local makers and artisans. Every Sunday, you can find a revolving series of live performers, engaging activities and exhibitions at the ArtShip and fun zone! Our farmers market accepts WIC, EBT and Market Match! 37th Avenue at Ortega Street, 9 a.m.-2 p.m. Go to sunsetmercantilesf.com or call 415-465-2475 for more details.

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Tyrone Bartoli has been a professional photographer since 1995. He is available for a wide range of photo shoots. Call for a free consultation: 415-846-7838. Also, check out his Instagram page @tyronebartoli. Ask for the Sunset Beacon discount. Learn more at TyroneBartoli.com.

STAMP COLLECTOR AND STAMP COLLECTIONS

Stamp collector is buying stamps and stamp collections. I am buying the "older stamps" from the 1800s to 1930. American Philatelic Society member since 1986. Pictures are appreciated. Call or text message 415-533-0761.

WRITER LAUNCHES NEWSLETTER

Former Sunset Beacon writer Becky Lee recently launched a newsletter exploring the role that place plays in our lives – how it shapes the work we do, what we create and who we are. In 2021, Becky moved from the Outer Sunset to Gualala, a coastal community about three hours north of San Francisco. She writes about her own experiences moving to new places, living in huge cities and small towns, as well as her childhood and college years on the East Coast. https://madeinplace.substack.com/.

THANK YOU!

Sincere thanks to the Sunset Beacon readers who generously donated to the Nourish Your Neighborhood Newspaper campaign. Your contribution will help keep us financially healthy. To donate, please send a check to: Sunset Beacon, P.O. Box 16035, SF, CA, 94116 or send via PayPal to Editor@RichmondSunsetNews.com. Thank you!

Announcements: $1 per word, 20-word minimum. Share birthdays, weddings, anniversaries, births, obituaries, graduations, sports highlights, business accomplishments, retirements, college admissions, etc.

FREE: Add a name to the monthly birthday list or submit free community events at no charge.

FREE: There is no charge for occasional announcements for small businesses celebrating an anniversary or other significant milestone or event. Send announcement to Editor@RichmondSunsetNews.com.

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March 12
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Green Road—on tour from County Wexford performing with soprano Clodagh Kinsella
March 17
St. Patrick's Day Celebration
Corned Beef & Cabbage with live music and Irish Dancing
March 18
Rumble at the Beach—Ireland and USA amateur boxing with Fire in the Ring Boxing
March 19
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Assembly

Assemblymember Phil Ting

Diversifying Juries With Higher Pay

Serving as a juror is a meaningful opportunity for impactful civic engagement, allowing everyday people to participate in our legal system and in our democracy. Yet, there continues to be a lack of adequate and proper representation in our juries.

While California requires employers to provide time off for jury duty, they are not required to pay their workers while they serve on a jury. If a juror's job does not cover their wages or salary, the court system compensates them nothing on their first day of service, then only $15 per day after that. The stipend hardly covers gas and parking, let alone lunch in many places.

Consequently, a potential juror often claims financial hardship, so they can go earn their full paycheck instead. That means juries are frequently less diverse and tend to be wealthier. It is fundamentally unjust for potential jurors to opt out due to financial constraints.

In order to address the disproportionate and inequitable jury composition, I have proposed AB-881, or "Be the Jury California." It increases daily compensation in criminal cases for low- to moderate-income Californians to $100 a day, making jury duty more accessible to all Californians.

To qualify, a juror's earnings for the past 12 months must be less than 8% of their area's median income. He or she must also meet at least one of the following:

• Their employer does not compensate for jury service; or

• Their employer does not compensate for the estimated duration of jury service; or

• They are self-employed; or

• They are unemployed.

Additionally, for jurors who don't meet the above criteria, AB-881 makes $15/day the base pay, as opposed to the cap. This gives courts the flexibility to pay more, if they can and are able to.

This new proposal is modeled after a 2021 bill I authored, AB-1452, which allowed San Francisco to try out a similar program. Since its implementation locally, the results have been substantial.

• 81% of participants say they could not have served without the $100 per day stipend.

• Program participants reflected the racial demographics of the broader San Francisco population with 63% of participants self-identified as people of color.

My hope is the higher pay will result in more diverse juries up and down the state, just like it did in San Francisco. A fundamental aspect of democracy in the United States is the right to a fair trial and a jury of our peers, which means a jury of equals, drawing from different races, genders and socioeconomic classes. But due to the steep financial hardship facing potential jurors, jury service – in its current form – is a luxury for people to participate in. It's an incredible sacrifice to serve for workers who are surviving paycheck-to-paycheck.

AB-881 is a crucial reform to our criminal legal system. It will make our juries more illustrative of California's great diversity by establishing a greater incentive for working-class and low-income Californians to serve on juries.

I thank our San Francisco partners at the Public Defender's Office, District Attorney's Office, Treasurer's Office, Superior Court and Bar Association for working to diversify juries in our City. It's now time to make similar strides statewide.

Phil Ting represents the 19th Assembly District, which includes the west side of San Francisco along with the communities of Broadmoor, Colma and Daly City as well as part of South San Francisco. Find an archive of his columns at RichmondSunsetNews.com.

Police Blotter

Carrying a Concealed Weapon: 800 Block of Ulloa Street, Feb. 1, 8:28 a.m.

A witness observed a gun on the ground, which was picked up by the suspect who then walked away with a group of people that included several juveniles.

A review of security cameras confirmed that an object had fallen out of the suspect's rolling bag.

Responding officers located the suspect with a gun in their possession and arrested the suspect.

Robbery of a Residence: La Playa Street and Lincoln Way, Feb. 4, 9:51 p.m.

Officers responded to a report of a robbery with a gun.

The victim stated that they parked and exited their vehicle when the suspect approached while holding a gun and demanded the victim's dog.

A struggle then ensued over the victim's key before the suspect pepper sprayed the victim and took the key.

The suspect then went to the vehicle with the key and took the victim's dog.

Stunt Driving: 41st Avenue and Noriega Street, Feb. 5, 1:53 a.m.

Officers responded to a report of an incident of stunt driving.

An officer and sergeant were first to arrive on scene. The suspects threw items at the officers' vehicle while one suspect also jumped on top of the vehicle.

The suspects and bystanders then left the area as additional units arrived at the scene.

Threats, Brandishing a Weapon: Judah and La Playa Streets, Feb. 6, 4:53 p.m.

Officers responded to a report of two suspects fighting with weapons.

The witness stated that one suspect was holding a knife while the second suspect was holding a baton.

Responding officers arrived at the location and detained the two suspects.

After further investigation, one suspect was arrested and the other suspect was cited.

Assault, Robbery, Carrying a Concealed Weapon: 2600 Block of Judah Street, Feb. 5, 10:50 a.m.

Officers responded to a report of a subject with a knife chasing after another person.

The victim said they were inside a store when they overheard the store's owner confronting the suspect over shoplifting. An argument ensued and then escalated with the suspect observed making stabbing and slicing motions with a knife. The victim confronted the suspect, who then directed their attention to the victim.

Responding officers detained two subjects. After further investigation, the suspect was arrested.

The store owner suffered from head lacerations during the incident.

Trespassing: 1300 Block of 38th Avenue, Feb. 7, 11:31 a.m.

The witness reported that a contractor left the building's garage door open for their employees to enter and exit the home.

Afterward, the witness and victim noticed an unknown backpack by the garage and discovered the suspect had trespassed and entered the building. The suspect was located, escorted out of the building and detained.

After further investigation, the suspect was cited.

Vehicle Tampering, Brandishing a Weapon: 2700 Block of 42nd Avenue, Feb. 9, 6:33 a.m.

The victim said they heard the loud sound of power tools and discovered the suspect was suspiciously close to the victim's vehicle. The victim yelled out and the suspect responded by producing a handgun but did not point the firearm at the victim.

Responding officers investigated and determined that the suspect had been attempting to steal the vehicle's catalytic converter.

Traffic Violation: 19th Avenue and Noriega Street, Feb. 10, 9:22 p.m.

Officers on patrol observed a driver using a cellphone that was mounted onto the car's dashboard. The driver was then observed scrolling through a social media application and playing different videos on the screen while driving.

The officers conducted a traffic stop. A computer check on the driver revealed they had never been issued a driver's license. The driver was cited.

Stolen Vehicle: Irving Street and Great Highway, Feb. 14, 11:03 a.m.

The victim reported they had located their vehicle, which had been stolen, and discovered multiple items inside that did not belong to the victim.

Responding officers investigated the items and, after further investigation, developed a possible lead to the suspect who had stolen the vehicle.

Assault: Lincoln Way and 47th Avenue, Feb. 16, 1:45 p.m.

The victim told responding officers he walked across the street to ask the suspect to stop idling his motorcycle by asking "What's going on?"

The suspect responded that they would pepper spray the victim if the victim did not back away. The victim repeated their question and was pepper sprayed.

The suspect then left the area.

Robbery: 1300 Block of La Playa Street, Feb. 17, 2:34 p.m.

The victim, a USPS employee, said they had been delivering mail and was behind a metal gate when the suspect exited a nearby vehicle and started rummaging through the mail in the victim's cart.

The victim confronted the suspect who then pointed a gun at the victim.

Robbery: 2400 Block of 45th Avenue, Feb. 17, 3:03 a.m.

The victim heard suspicious noises outside and went to investigate.

The victim observed two suspects attempting to steal the victim's catalytic converter and confronted them. One of the suspects responded by threatening the victim with the saw they were using.

Shooting: Lincoln Way and 41st Avenue, Feb. 18, 11:32 a.m.

The victim stated they were driving when they observed a vehicle making a left turn onto Lincoln Way then coming to a stop. As the victim drove by the vehicle, they heard gunshots.

The victim later discovered that two bullets had grazed the vehicle and caused damage.

Responding officers located a second vehicle with a shattered window and bullet damage.

Brandishing a Weapon: Lincoln Way and 32nd Avenue, Feb. 19, 4:04 p.m.

The victim stated that they had been driving and accidentally cut off the suspect's vehicle.

The suspect then followed the victim and honked their horn for 20 blocks. The victim responded to the suspect with a rude gesture before the suspect then changed lanes, pulled next to the victim and pointed a gun at them.

Battery: 1300 Block of Lincoln Way, Feb. 26, 10:49 a.m.

Officers responded to a report of a battery.

The victim said the suspect, a friend, waited for the victim to walk out of their apartment building before the suspect punched the victim's face and head before throwing the victim onto the ground.

The suspect then fled the area.

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Sunset Explosion

Continued from page 1

there, it might explain why the house was really nice, well-maintained. "It stood out among the rest of the houses on the block."

While later news reports said Price was described as a contractor (who "flipped houses") and his wife Rita of eight years was a "kitchen designer," nothing in the formal press releases provided by the SFFD/SFPD gave any such specific details.

Not even the mention of what type of narcotics were involved on the premises of the house were said in initial SFPD/SFFD press releases. The releases did report that Price has been charged with felonies of involuntary manslaughter, manufacturing of narcotics and two counts of child endangerment.

A caretaker for Rita Price was among those hospitalized as a result of the explosion and fire.

It wasn't immediately clarified as to what illness or condition the caretaker for Rita was hired to care for. Since initial reports, it has been reported that, according to her friends, Rita attended Balboa High School and that she suffered from a stroke in 2014.

On Feb. 15, the SF District Attorney's Office (SFDA) announced that it is adding four counts of reckless burning and one count of elder abuse to the charges in the case. SF District Attorney Brooke Jenkins said she is determined to "stand with the community and the victims in seeking justice."

In formal statement, Jenkins said, "We must send a clear message that the manufacture of dangerous drugs will not be tolerated in San Francisco; this activity is not only dangerous for the individuals involved but entire neighborhoods as this case so tragically demonstrates."

The SFDA's office also said in official statement that investigators recovered suspected butane tanks, ovens and other materials consistent with processing hash oil with volatile solvents. Investigators also tested a jar of suspected hash oil and found it contained acetone and other dangerous and highly flammable solvents.

Prosecutors with the SFDA wanted Price to remain in custody awaiting trial because they feared he would flee if released on bail. And prosecutors feared that Price could become a risk to public safety.

Deputy Public Defender Sierra Villaran maintained that Price was not a risk to the community.

"Mr. Price would never do anything to harm his family," Villaran said. "He is devastated by the loss of his wife and displacement of his children from their home. He denies these allegations, and once we're able to sort through all the evidence in court, I believe he will be exonerated.

"The judge did the right thing by releasing him from jail because he does not pose a danger nor is he a flight risk, and we're relieved that he will be able to be with his family as they grieve and begin to heal from this tragedy," she said.

If convicted of all charges, Price faces more than 13 years in state prison, according to the SFDA's office.

Although, charges have been filed, this remains an active investigation. Anyone with information is asked to call the San Francisco Police Department tip line at 1-415-575-4444 or text a tip to TIP411 and begin the text message with SFPD. You may remain anonymous.

'Then and Now': 46th Avenue and Ortega Street

Above: John Voltz's house at 46th Avenue and Ortega Street was hit by a rare San Francisco tornado on Feb. 24, 1930. *Photo courtesy of a private collector/Western Neighborhoods Project/OpenSFHistory.*

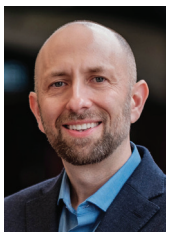
Right: The house was repaired and exists at the same location. The Outer Sunset neighborhood is a bit more crowded than it was 93 years ago, with houses now standing where sand dunes once were. *Photo by Michael Durand.*

Left top: Smoke from the Outer Sunset was visible for miles, as seen in this photo taken from Golden Gate Heights. *Photo by Angie Pettit.*

Left: The aftermath of the explosion and fire. *Photo by Barry Hermanson.*

Above: The house fully ablaze. *Photo courtesy of the San Francisco Fire Department.*

City Hall



Supervisor Joel Engardio

Safety and Security a Priority

The recent explosion of a house in a quiet Sunset neighborhood was traumatic for residents and raises larger public safety questions.

A resident of the home was arrested and charged with multiple felonies, including illegal drug manufacturing and manslaughter. The blast and fire killed one person and severely injured another. The homes on either side were destroyed. Homes across the street had their windows and even garage doors blown out. Several parked cars were damaged.

I was at City Hall in a public safety committee meeting when I received a text about the explosion and three-alarm from the fire chief. I immediately went to the scene on 22nd Avenue.

In the days after the explosion, I heard from many residents throughout the Sunset who wondered: Is a home on their street dangerously manufacturing drugs behind the garage door? How many homes double as hidden drug labs or sell other illegal products and services? What can be done to prevent another tragedy?

These are questions we need to work with police and fire officials to address. Anyone found to be engaging in dangerous and illegal activity should face consequences. Running a drug lab that blows up a house and causes death and mayhem in a neighborhood is as serious as dealing deadly fentanyl in an open-air drug market. Both crimes should be prosecuted in San Francisco.

Town Halls

My office held a closed town hall for residents of 22nd Avenue most affected by the house explosion and fire. The meeting was closed to the media and general public. The affected residents needed a safe space where they could express their concerns and speak directly to officials to learn what resources are available to assist them.

I convened the following city department heads:

- Fire Chief Jeanine Nicholson briefed us on the incident response and follow up.
- Police Captain Robert Yick gave updates on the criminal case (the suspect of the drug manufacturing lab was arrested and charged with multiple felonies).
- City Assessor Joaquin Torres described how owners of damaged homes can apply for property tax relief.
- The director of the Department of Building Inspection explained when repairs can be done with and without permits.
- Mary Ellen Carroll, the director of the Department of Emergency Management, told us how the City provides a coordinated response during and after tragic events.

I know this was a traumatic experience for residents living on 22nd Avenue. It disrupted our sense of stability and safety in our homes and neighborhood. I stand with District Attorney Brooke Jenkins who is prosecuting this crime. There must be consequences for serious crimes in San Francisco to let people know such dangerous and reckless behavior will not be tolerated.

We will do a public town hall about public safety in the near future.

I will also investigate possible legislation to ban the delivery and use in residential neighborhoods of the type of industrial grade equipment needed for dangerous drug labs.

Scarce Police Resources

The day after the explosion, I did a merchant walk on Irving Street with the Sunset police captain to speak with store owners about their safety concerns. They want more police help, but we have a severe shortage of officers.

The police station serving the Sunset has lost half of its officers since 2020. On any given night, only four or five officers are patrolling an area that has a population of 130,000. Those few and overstretched officers cover a huge geographic area from Twin Peaks to the ocean and Golden Gate Park to Daly City.

When officers are sick or injured, others have to work overtime. We can't go a night without officers. Overtime funding is essential. That's why I'm co-sponsoring Mayor London Breed's police funding measure.

I'm committed to investing in our police department so it can retain and recruit officers. We are short more than 500 officers and hundreds more are expected to retire in July. I attended the recent police academy graduation and there were only 12 new officers in the class.

I'm also committed to changing the narrative about police in San Francisco. Our officers are diverse and committed to serving at the highest standard. Our police department is a model of reform and has been praised by the California Department of Justice for already implementing more than 90% of needed reforms. We need to let people know that it is honorable to be an officer in San Francisco.

Joel Engardio is the District 4 representative on the San Francisco Board of Supervisors. He can be reached at engardiostaff@sfgov.org.

Greenhouse

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planned learning center due to cost considerations. The new nursery complex will focus on its primary function of growing plants and will not be open to the public.

The new nursery complex has a smaller footprint than the previous one, but unlike the previous nursery, it will be surrounded by fencing. According to SFBG, this will be less confusing to the public and is necessary for safety and the protection of plants and equipment.

SFBG is taking measures to mitigate disruptions due to the construction of the new nursery and fencing. As an example, the Garden is working with Tim Wong, a senior biologist with the California Academy of Sciences, to relocate the locally rare California Pipevine Swallowtail butterfly, which feeds on the pipevine plant growing on trails behind the nursery's new fence.

For the past few years, visitors to this area have been able to watch as the Swallowtail's black and orange spotted caterpillars fed on pipevine plants and emerged from their chrysalises as iridescent blue and black butterflies. Wong, also a Garden volunteer, has been moving the pipevine and remaining chrysalises to the Children's Garden to ensure that the butterflies continue to thrive. The caterpillars, capable of traveling a quarter of a mile, can also find pipevine growing in the nearby Redwood Grove during the transition.

Wong is personally responsible for re-introducing the California Pipevine Swallowtails to San Francisco, raising them in his backyard and transferring them to the Botanical Garden and elsewhere. He has been raising butterflies as a hobby since he was in elementary school.

Japanese Tea Garden

There are also new design plans for the Japanese Tea Garden. By this fall, the plaza surrounding the Tea Garden's newly restored pagoda should be completely redesigned and landscaped. The project is being led by Hoichi Kurisu, renowned for his construction of Japanese gardens worldwide.

The new plaza will open up after removal of the old fencing surrounding the Pagoda. It will also be more flexible in its potential uses, allowing for public gatherings and celebrations.

Adding to its authenticity, the new plaza will incorporate stones donated from the ancient Tatsuyama quarry in Takasago, Japan. There are also plans to restore the wooden long bridge in the Tea Garden, perhaps opening a second entrance that will reduce lines at the front gate.

As a reminder, San Francisco residents can now enjoy all three gardens – the Botanical Garden, Japanese Tea Garden and Conservatory of Flowers – for free. Be prepared to show proof of residency, such as a California driver's license or ID showing your San Francisco address, a recent utility bill, lease, or other official document showing your San Francisco address as well as a photo ID. Digital proof on your smart phone (i.e., photo of your ID, screenshot of your utility bill) is acceptable.

If you would like to help in the effort to bring the California Pipevine Swallowtail back to San Francisco, plant some pipevine (a.k.a., Dutchman's Pipe or Aristolochia californica) in your garden.

The new greenhouse under construction in the Botanical Garden will replace the deteriorated facilities that were in use for more than 55 years. *Courtesy photo.*

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Irving St. Demo

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that is not ambiguous, and they want it to be tested on an ongoing basis."

Both this lot and the property across the street had dry cleaning businesses on them in the past, which use chemicals containing PCEs. Although it is suspected these were the original sources of the chemical, so far testing of the sandy soil underneath them has not found the exact location of where the chemical is now vaporizing up from and into surrounding neighborhood homes.

Don Moore, an environmental consultant working pro-bono for the MSNA, said the PCE vapors going into surrounding homes is a "serious health risk."

"This is a residential setting with decades of exposure to PCE," Moore told the Board. "The demolition process really offers the best and last opportunity to address this significant data gap to inform decisions moving forward. It's a serious health risk to existing residents adjacent to this."

Attorney Charles "CJ" Higley of the law firm Farella, Braun and Martel, representing the developers, the Tenderloin Neighborhood Development Corporation (TNDC), said the demolition permit was issued in connection to an SB-35 project.

"SB-35 projects are exempt from environmental review, but the state law also imposes significant limitations on a city's ability to deny permits that implement SB-35 projects," Higley said. "SB-35 very explicitly says that a City shall issue permits, including demolition permits, to implement SB-35 projects so long as the permit application is consistent with the project approved by the Planning Department in its initial determination of eligibility. A city's review of such permit applications shall not inhibit, chill or preclude development."

Higley pointed out that the City may be in a tough spot.

"Overturning (demolition permit approval) in this appeal would violate state law and put the City in legal jeopardy," he said

"I do think that SB-35 ties our hands," Vice President Jose Lopez said. "The agencies across the City that have worked on this, in addition to the (California) DTSC (Department of Toxic Substances Control) have told us that it's safe to proceed, that the demolition will not be prohibitive of further testing, or remediation, that the site in question does not have indications of being the source of the contamination.

"I think, with those things in mind, I'm not sure how honoring the appeal is really a realistic option before us," Lopez said.

Commissioner John Trasviña, however, was not persuaded.

"We're being told, 'SB-35 period,' and the neighbors are being told 'just put your head in the sand.' Well, not this sand and not until we know what's in there," Trasviña said. "It will be the densest concentration of housing in the Sunset District, and it is a dangerous area because we don't know otherwise at this point. We have a moral duty to the health and safety of members of all our communities, including the people who are going to live there.

"We also know that the (vapor) plumes go back and forth across that entire area. So, I'm not comforted by some of the aspects of the plans."

Commissioner Alex Lemberg joined Trasviña in his skepticism.

"Despite all of the testimony to the contrary, I'm still not entirely convinced that we should not impose some amount of condition on this permit," Lemberg said. "I think what the appellants are asking for is extremely limited and extremely reasonable. I would certainly be in support of a motion that imposes the very limited conditions that have been proposed here tonight.

"I'm convinced that the residents of the new 2550 Irving will be protected from PCE contamination. I'm not convinced that the neighbors will be."

Commissioner J.R. Eppler had a more nuanced view of the situation.

"SB-35 does not take this out of our hands. It simply says that we have to use a very limited scope of review," Eppler said. "I think that we have been very diligent in trying to determine whether or not we have a scope of review to exercise here."

Through the process of the discussion with the DTSC "we have come to the understanding that there is a site plan," he said. "There's a commitment to strengthen elements of that site plan to meet, perhaps, deficiencies in what the neighborhood would want. There will be vapor dust monitoring at the fence line. There has been examination of I think it was 40 samples, on site. There will be more of that going on throughout the process.

"You can't have proof of safety. Proof of safety doesn't exist. You cannot prove that negative. We can measure it and that measurement is going to have error bars on it. We don't know if it's higher or lower, but we have a good guess of where it is. And if it's below a certain number we have to be able to accept it and move on."

Eppler said the issue for the Board is whether the permit was properly issued by the Planning Department. If they think the permit could have been issued better, they could then impose additional conditions.

"But we have to look to say whether that condition is something that would be applied on other permits at the time, and it's not," he said. "That gets us back to the SB-35 land and that's what handcuffs us from doing what we would normally do because in other circumstances this permit would have come across exactly the same way."

Eppler said the environmental concerns have been adequately addressed by the DTSC.

"I don't think that we have the ability to impose any other conditions on the permit holder, as a result of the state law. And that's an unintended consequence. That's something that may need to be reviewed and re-legislated if this is a problem but that's, unfortunately, the law that binds us at this time."

Whit Smith of the DTSC told the board they would continue to monitor the site for evidence of PCEs during the demolition.

"If we find issues, we will be collecting samples, but as to an additional round of investigation, I'm not sure whether the community members will be satisfied with one more incremental investigation. It's hard to understand what incremental investigation scope would satisfy all parties," Smith said.

President Swig said the question is, "Will more testing help to address the locals' concerns?"

"But what is the value of one life? Is it worth the time? Is it worth the testing? This is what we have to ask ourselves here," Swig said.

In the end, Swig, Lopez and Eppler voted to deny the appeal, while Lemberg and Trasviña voted to support it.

Resource Fair

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gram every year as Calvin holds special interests in public transportation and travel.

Lucas Tobin, supervisor of Therapeutic Recreation Inclusion Services, advocates for the adventurous nature of children with disabilities.

"We know that kids do better academically if they're doing camps and other engaging things during the summertime," explained Tobin. "Our goal is helping kids with disabilities have access to enriching activities during the summer so that they're able to keep learning and keep having social interaction through healthy physical activities."

Mimi Schiffman and her 4-year-old daughter Sierra found themselves stumbling into the engaging activity booths and opportunities; it was a lucky surprise discovery after receiving their COVID-19 booster shot next door. Schiffman, enjoying the resources available throughout the fair, appreciated the upbeat encouragement of summertime possibilities for youth across San Francisco.

"The energy of the people who are here to facilitate this is incredible, and the diversity of city entertainment options and education options for children is so cool," she said. As Schiffman admired Sierra dancing along with the choreography of the Zumba team and interacting with the pom-pom STEM projects, she said that local events, such as the Resource Fair, help make living in expensive districts of San Francisco worthwhile.

"The City can feel very hard to raise a family here," Shiffman said. "It's an expensive place to live and it's all divided up. But then you come (to the Summer Resource Fair) and you realize how many programs there are and how many people are stoked to get kids involved. It's an indication of what's out there and reminds me to get involved and see what the city has."

Jessica Huey, program specialist of the Therapeutic Recreation Inclusion Services team, recognized the request for "more information for people with disabilities regardless of their age" within her department. Huey also hopes to increase awareness for the needs of children with disabilities through her role in the therapeutic recreation branch and with the citywide collaborators accompanying booths standing alongside her.

Setting up sensory-active equipment, such as a crash pad, balance beam and a hug-simulating steam roller in the "movement chill zone" at the County Fair Building, Huey encouraged children and adults alike to discover the benefits of the engagement tools' sensory input.

"It's really good for the general public to see that the specialized equipment is pretty universal, and anyone can use it and learn a little bit about our sensory needs," Huey said.

The recreational leader also applauded the collaborative initiative groups of the Therapeutic Recreation Inclusion Services team, including SF Department of Children, Youth and their Families (DCYF), Golden Gate Regional Center and the Special Education Department of the San Francisco Unified School District (SPED).

"We're really trying to work together as partners and fill the need for programs for people with disabilities," Huey said. "It's an ongoing work in progress. We're trying to get other programs to be more accessible and inclusive and provide more support."

Early Childhood Special Education Supervisor Moira Zacharakis sits beside Julia Martin, ombudsperson for special education, communicating to fair-goers and families about education options that occur over the summer and extend into the fall.

"This is a fabulous event for all of our families within the City to understand what's available to them over the summer and throughout the school year," Zacharakis said. "We are trying to promote clarity for our students who have individualized education plans so that they know what their options are over the summer."

As the SPED representatives echoed Tobin's understanding of positive social interactions through summer programs, Martin displayed hopes of continuing to work with DCYF and the therapeutic recreation team to "make sure that all the camps are perfectly set up to accommodate students with disabilities and provide the support they need."

With anticipation to expand opportunities for children and families with disabilities, Tobin and Huey addressed the community and staff effort to broaden their resources and increase their accessibility.

"We're really working on recruiting staff who are trained and interested in working with people with disabilities so we can offer more outside of Rec. and Park and outside of the small nonprofit where we are," said Huey. "It takes a village and a community just to get us all together and be supportive to one another."

Learn more about the resource fair at dcyf.org/summer-resource-fairs.

Tower-building with materials from nature was one of the many fun and creative learning activities at the fair. *Photo by Kate Quach.*

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